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# JUNIOR HIGH-SCHOOL STUDY TESTS

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One of the many problems that has arisen as a result of our efforts to perfect a junior high-school organization that really meets the new and constantly growing needs of the boys and girls at this particular stage of their school life has been that of developing a workable plan for making the most effective use of the time for study provided for by our longer periods and the lengthened school day. We found little data upon which to base our conclusions and so we set about the task of formulating tests to be given to the pupils as soon as they entered upon their work under the new organization.

This article attempts to give some idea of the reasons for giving the tests, the particular object of each test, the test itself, and finally some of the conclusions that have resulted from a study of the tests in relation to the special problem of using study periods in school most effectively.

## PURPOSE OF THE TESTS

Our results indicate that the pupils come to us with comparatively little idea of what real studying means. The general purpose, therefore, of giving the tests to pupils entering junior high school may be stated as follows:

1. To make students aware of certain things that they ought to know about studying, and to create a desire for instruction in the best way of studying.
2. To suggest to teachers both class needs and individual needs as the basis of possible and desirable lines of instructions.

The specific purpose of each test is indicated in the following brief tabulation:

1. The first test was designed to ascertain whether the students could select information from the printed page in response to questions.
2. The second test was designed to ascertain whether the pupils knew the meaning of certain expressions found in the text and used by them in their answers to the questions given in the first test.

3. The third test was designed to find out whether the pupils knew how to use a book.
  - a) Table of contents
  - b) Index
  - c) List of maps
  - d) Appendix
  - e) Reference to footnotes
  - f) Lists of general references
  - g) Paragraph headings
4. The fourth test was planned to bring out the following points:
  - a) Ability to select the *important* things told in a paragraph.
  - b) Ability to write *intelligent* questions about a paragraph.
  - c) Ability to collect the information suggested by a simple outline.

## FOUR TESTS

A regular textbook was used as the basis of each test and thus provision was made for future tests of a similar character by means of which the progress of each individual might be traced. Following is a statement of the four tests given to the pupils on successive weeks.

## STUDY TEST No. I

Based on page 53 of *Essentials of Geography* by Brigham and McFarlane.

## I. Directions:

1. Record the time at the top of your paper when you begin to read and when you have finished answering the questions.
2. Open the book at page 53.
3. Read the entire page.
4. Referring to this page as often as necessary answer the following questions.

## II. Questions:

1. Why was New England so named?.....1 credit
2. Copy the sentence that tells why the people came to New England .....1 credit
3. What else does the second paragraph tell you about the early settlers in New England?.....2 credits
4. State three reasons given on this page as to why the early settlers had such a difficult time.....3 credits
5. How does the chief industry in New England at the present time differ from that of the early days?.....2 credits
6. What part of New England has grown most rapidly?.....1 credit

## STUDY TEST No. II

Based on page 53 of *Essentials of Geography* by Brigham and McFarlane.

## I. Directions:

1. Record the time at the top of your paper when you begin to read and when you have finished answering the questions.

2. Open the book at page 53.
  3. Referring to this page as often as necessary, explain the meaning in your own words of the following expressions in the paragraphs indicated.
- II. Expression
- |                                    |                  |
|------------------------------------|------------------|
| Portion of our country.....        | second paragraph |
| Had not been permitted to do.....  | second paragraph |
| Ready to endure any hardships..... | second paragraph |
| Exceedingly rugged.....            | third paragraph  |
| Very forbidding.....               | third paragraph  |
| Dense forest.....                  | third paragraph  |
| Mother country.....                | third paragraph  |
| Native population.....             | third paragraph  |
| Most populous.....                 | fourth paragraph |
| Secondary importance.....          | fourth paragraph |
- Credits—one for each expression.

#### STUDY TEST No. III

Textbook—*Elementary History and Government* by Woodburn and Moran.

##### I. Directions:

1. Using your textbook in history, find the information called for in the following questions.

##### II. Questions:

1. In what chapter do you find an account of the Declaration of Independence? Tell how you found this chapter.....2 credits
2. On what pages do you find information about John Smith? Tell how you found these pages.....2 credits
3. On what page do you find a map showing the early settlement of New York State? Tell how you found this map.....2 credits
4. Name two topics found in the appendix.....1 credit
5. On page 24, in paragraph 4, what does the small figure "2" after the word "thought" mean?.....1 credit
6. Does the author give references to other books? If so, where?..1 credit
7. Give the paragraph headings on page 28.....1 credit

#### STUDY TEST No. IV

Textbook—*Introduction to American History* by Woodburn and Moran.

##### I. Directions:

1. Open your book and follow the directions given.

##### II. Directions:

1. State in your own words three important things told in the paragraph on the Phoenicians found on page 11.....3 credits
2. Write three questions that you would ask a pupil if you wanted to find out whether he knew the important facts in the first paragraph on the Egyptians on page 4.....3 credits
3. On pages 8 and 9 find the information called for in the following outline and state it in *your own words*:

Chaldeans:

- a) Location of their country.....1 credit
- b) Occupations of the people.....1 credit
- c) Their ruler and his famous gardens.....1 credit
- d) Some things the Chaldeans did.....1 credit

*Study of the results of the tests.*—Each teacher was asked to study the test results as follows:

I. Directions:

- 1. Find the median in each test.
- 2. Underline the scores below the median.
- 3. Star names of pupils below in every test.
- 4. Make a list of such pupils and study their marks in history to date.

II. Questions:

- 1. Are the slow pupils from a particular school?
- 2. Are they of one nationality?
- 3. Are they low on the comprehension test previously given?
- 4. Are they also slow in time?
- 5. How do the test results compare with oral recitations of the students?
- 6. Are they improving since the tests were given?

III. Questions submitted five months later:

- 1. In the silent study period, do the pupils begin to study at once as though they knew what to do?
- 2. Do they know something about evaluating a paragraph, that is, distinguishing between essential and nonessential statements?
- 3. Do they use the table of contents?
- 4. Can they use the index in its relation to studying from an outline?
- 5. Do they use footnote references in paragraphs intelligently?
- 6. Using their books, can they give definite answers to carefully planned questions?
- 7. Does the paragraph heading seem to have any meaning to them?
- 8. Can they formulate good questions in reference to a topic which they have just studied?
- 9. Can they recite readily from an outline?
- 10. Do they simply recite the facts stated in the textbook or do they show some gain in their ability to discuss given topics?

*Suggestive results of the tests.*—By comparing the results of Test No. I with the results of Test No. II, teachers have come to realize, as never before, that it is easily possible for children to give apparently good recitations and yet not have any adequate idea of what they are talking about. Incidentally we have all become more conscious of the fact that numerous adult expressions found in most of our textbooks require effort on the part of the pupils that taxes to the utmost their ability to get worth-while ideas.

A summary of the results of Test No. III based on the efforts of 256 pupils shows that

- 58.9 per cent did not make use of the table of contents.
- 49.5 per cent failed to use the index.
- 29.6 per cent failed to discover that there was a list of maps.
- 21.4 per cent could not locate the appendix.
- 27.3 per cent had no idea of the real meaning of a footnote.
- 23.0 per cent could not find the paragraph headings on a given page.
- 65.7 per cent were unable to discover how the author of this particular textbook provided definite lists of references for their help and guidance.

Some idea of the tremendous waste taking place when these students were endeavoring to find information on topics assigned may be gathered from the following answers to question 2, Test No. III:

- I looked the book through and through.
- I hunted up the pages.
- I found it going through from one page to another.
- By looking almost the whole book through.
- By taking one page at a time.

That pupils form strange ideas about things concerning which they are not properly informed may be gathered from answers to question 5, Test No. III. This question referred to a reference figure 2 that occurred in the paragraph after the word "thought" in the expression, "Columbus had thought." The following answers were given in reply to this question.

- It means Columbus thought twice before speaking.
- The figure two means Columbus thought twice.
- It has been said twice.
- It means twice as much water as land.
- It makes thought plural instead of singular.

Some idea of the varying ability of these seventh-grade pupils to follow the simple directions given under Test No. IV may be gained from the medians obtained after careful tabulation of the results of the work of eight different classes:

Class	Median	Class	Median
7B-1.....	80 per cent	7B-5.....	80 per cent
7B-2.....	55 per cent	7B-6.....	20 per cent
7B-3.....	60 per cent	7B-7.....	47 per cent
7B-4.....	60 per cent	7B-8.....	63 per cent

## SOME CONCLUSIONS

1. Pupils must be convinced that getting the meaning of the author from a printed page is quite different from repeating meaningless expressions found there.

2. Pupils must be taught to eliminate from consideration material of minor importance if important matter is to be given proper attention.

3. Ability to formulate intelligent questions is an indication that the student has some knowledge of the related and essential facts in the paragraph or the page under discussion.

4. Making a simple outline after having discovered the essential facts is a great help in memorizing desirable information.

5. Much valuable time can be saved if pupils have an adequate knowledge of how to use textbooks.

6. Real progress is the result of wisely directed individual effort.

7. Pupils must be convinced that it pays to give careful attention to all directions given by the teacher.

8. Teachers should help pupils realize that studying effectively is quite a different thing from studying anxiously.

9. It is easier to think through a lesson if a carefully prepared outline is followed.

10. Making worth-while notes helps in summarizing, in selecting essential material, and in gaining ability to reproduce it.

*Remedial measures used after giving tests.*—After the results of the tests had been carefully studied by the teachers of the several classes, they reported the following remedial measures by means of which they were attempting to increase effective silent study:

1. Following the study tests, special *practice* was given in the use of the index, table of contents, references, and other means of using the textbook.

2. The following types of directions, given as a part of the assignment, helped pupils to study more effectively.

a) Using the texts on your desk make a list of the pages on which any information is found concerning Marco Polo.

b) Read all references found in the index concerning the first topic in the lesson.

c) Write a statement giving paragraph heading and page where reference to the mariner's compass is found.

d) Write an original question based upon the second topic in today's lesson.

e) Verify your work by using Gordy's *American Beginnings in Europe*.

What additional information does this book furnish?

3. Several periods during the term were spent in reading the text with the pupils who were called upon to give the meaning of phrases and sentences in their own simple vocabulary.
4. Corrected study tests were given back to the pupils and discussed.
5. Pupils' *questions* were discussed by the class and those of minor importance were rejected.
6. Drill was given in the use of chapter, section, and paragraph headings.
7. Frequent use was made of co-operative outlines to enable pupils to summarize their thoughts and select important facts.
8. Definite references were given in the assignment to particular paragraphs or sections which pupils were asked to read and then to tabulate the important facts that furnished desired information.
9. Much more attention was given to ascertaining whether pupils understood adult expressions used in our textbooks.
10. Pupils were required to prove their statements by reference to the textbook. This helped to secure accuracy of statement, to prevent careless habits in reading, and to make the students more gracious in acknowledging their own mistakes.
11. Practice was given in using the textbook to find definite information suggested by a carefully prepared outline.
12. One teacher indicates that the tests helped her along the following lines:
  - a) To remember that the assignment should serve, at least, two purposes, namely, to state the requirements of the new lesson, and to suggest the best ways of studying it.
  - b) To keep in mind points that ought to be emphasized in silent study.
  - c) To modify the *content* of lesson plans.
  - d) To supervise silent study more successfully because of having more clearly in mind some of the things that ought to be observed while a class is studying.
  - e) To analyze the oral response of the pupils more effectively because of coming to realize that it reflects study habits.